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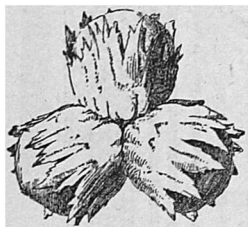
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## NATURE IN ART.

BY F. EDWARD HULME, F.L.S., F.S.A.

A SERIES OF ARTICLES—NUMBER EIGHT.

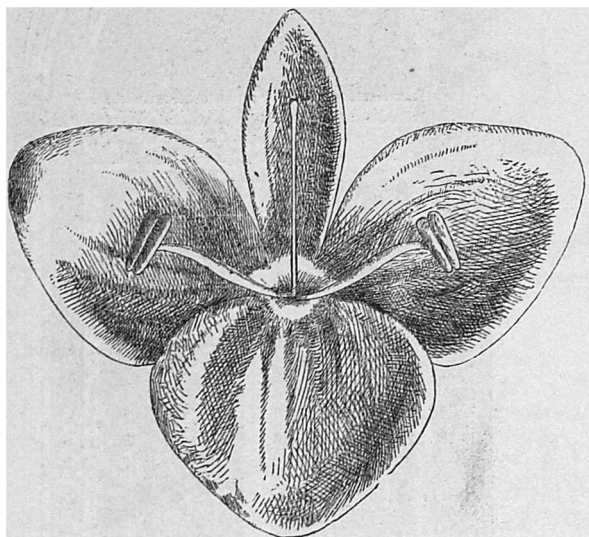
THE latter half of our last paper was occupied with illustrations from nature of the value to the designer of repetition, alternation, and contrast; and we may now quote some few examples of their use in art. Ancient Egyptian, Greek, and Indian art supply abundant illustrations. Repetition is a characteristic of much of the honeysuckle ornaments for example, and this is frequently varied by alternation of form, size, or direction; of form by the alternation of a contrasting feature; of size by being alternately large and small; and of direction by being pointed first upwards and then downwards, in regular series. Other examples,



NUMBER ONE.

from all the sources we have mentioned, have designs based on the sequence of bud and fully-opened flower, leaf and flower, or leaf and fruit. It is but needful just to name these few illustrations, but anyone who will turn to any book like Owen Jones' "Grammar of Ornaments," Zahn's "Pompeii," or Rosellini's "Egypt," will find no difficulty in multiplying them tenfold.

Symmetry, in its more limited meaning, of the answering of part to part, or in its more liberal sense as expressing a general balance, is a principle that we see fully exemplified both in nature and in art. When the form can only be divided into two similar portions the result is termed bi-symmetry, but where the similar parts are more numerous the arrangement is termed multisymmetrical—the forms of the heart's-ease or pansy, of the foxglove, the speedwell, or the two-spurred funitory show examples of the first form, and the sunflower, mallow, and many other flowers of the second. Our first illustration is a sketch of the speedwell blossom, while our second is the flower of the funitory—a native of North America, and known botanically as the *Fumaria Cucullaria*. Multisymmetrical flowers are much more numerous everywhere than the others; the mallow, Fig. 3, is a good illustration of these. Figs. 4 and 5, the butterfly and the moth, supply us with other illustrations of bi-symmetrical forms in another direction, while star-fish, sea-anemones and the delicate flakes of the falling snow are all multi-symmetrical. Both in nature and in art the exact balance of parts is only pleasing in the lower and less prominent forms; and while we are quite content to see the two halves of a pansy alike, or the wings of a butterfly, more content indeed, than to find them dissimilar in form or marking, we should strongly object to seeing either an oak tree or mountain peak capable of being split up into two portions of identical shape. In the same

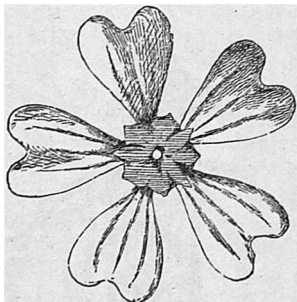


NUMBER TWO.

way in art; the symmetrical arrangement of the two halves of a Corinthian capital, or the design on a flooring-tile, is eminently desirable; but we enjoy the dissimilarity of the two great flanking towers of the west front of the cathedral of Rouen, and the variety of attitude, motion, action and expression in the figures in the grand frieze of the Parthenon. In minor matters symmetry is often desirable, and can rarely be objectionable, but in grander things mechanical symmetry would be an offence frequently, and it may, in cases, profitably give place to a freedom that is only restrained by the sense of the desirability of a general balance

of the parts. We pass, in fact, from repetition of form to variation.

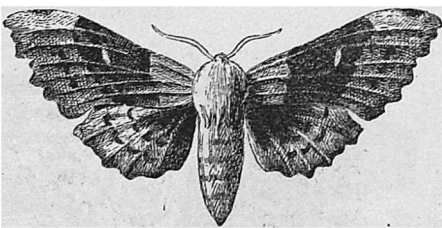
The variation seen in nature is one of the most valuable of the hints she is ever ready to give to the artist and designer. How frequently do we find some painter making a success in some definite direction and ever afterwards sticking in that one groove, until at length, as we visit annually the exhibition of pictures, it becomes unnecessary to consult our catalogue at all. We see a grand picture, a vast expanse of placid ocean, shimmering and radiant in the sunshine, and as we gaze on



NUMBER THREE.

the marvellous sense of boundless space we cordially agree in the popular verdict in its beauty; but when Mr. A., having scored so distinct a triumph, ever afterwards gives us practically the same thing, we turn away at last satiated. Mr. B.'s strong point, on the contrary, is the representation of a good stretch of country, all aglow with ripening corn; the harvest men gather in the fruit of their labor, while here and there the shadow of a gently moving cloud gives them refreshment in the midst of the heat-haze that permeates the whole scene, and bathes it in the sunlight of the later days of summer.

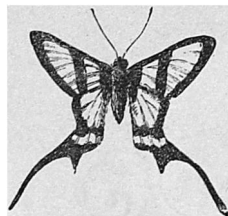
The picture is beautiful in sentiment, admirable in execution; and the first picture of the painter arouses our warmest appreciation, a feeling that gradually gives place to a decidedly cooler feeling as the revolving years bring us to the tenth or twelfth of these grand scenes. The reapers working or lurching, the golden grain half standing and half in lines of sheaves, the purple of the distant hills, the sombre richness of the verdure of the clump of trees, the black and white dog, the



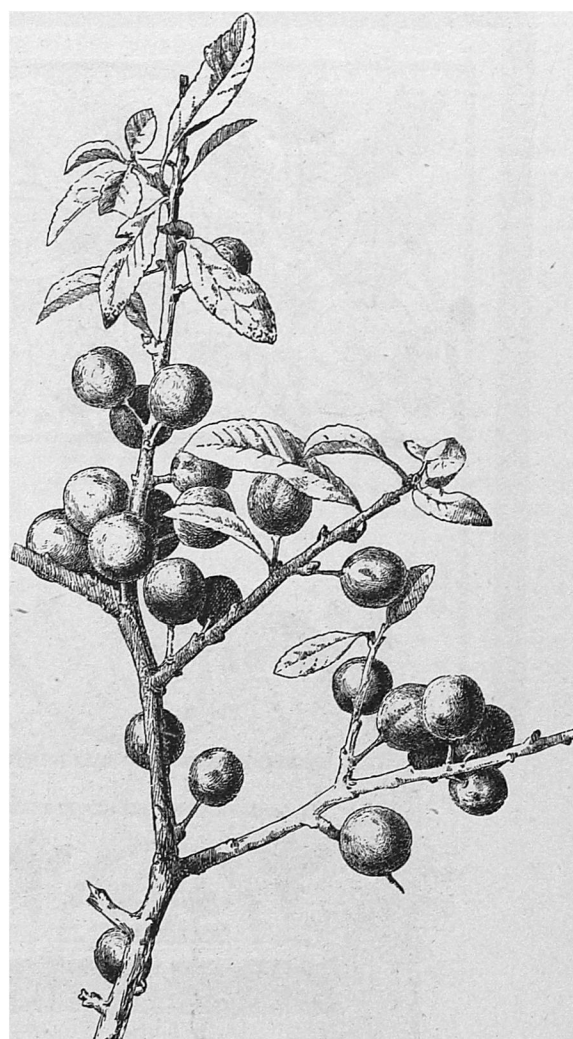
NUMBER FOUR.

cloud-flecked expanse of blue sky, are all there again, slightly re-arranged; but the chief difference is that whereas number one was "a view in Surrey," and number seven "a Kentish corn-field," number nine differs from number ten in having a quotation from a different poet to the other. Do we not, in the same way, naturally look for a capital rendering of the country in its wintry mantle of snow from another man? while yet another always serves us up grapes, a melon, or a quaint jar or vase. Another artist is always basing his grand picture on Shakespearian plays, while yet another is always—saddest of all, perhaps—choosing humorous subjects, until we loathe the very sight of his work. Most animal painters, again, seem to know little beyond horses, dogs, sheep, and cattle, though Landseer, always pre-eminent, takes us to the Arctic solitudes, and shows us the polar bears in their dreary home, gives us delightful pictures of monkeys at their gambols, introduces us to the lordly lion and the hunted stag. The whole field of incident and emotion in human life—the whole field of the literature of the world, from the days of Homer to the novel of the day before yesterday are open to the figure painter. The rush and turmoil of ocean—the towering crags or the mountain fastnesses—the sweet pastoral peace of the valleys—the verdure and solemn shade of the forest—the wide expanse of the bleak and purple moorland—the soothing influences of the placid lake and gently flowing river, are all spread out before the landscape painter to choose from at his will, while the whole realm of animated nature, all that walks the earth or cleaves the waters beneath or the air above is at the service of the animal painter. Under these circumstances may we not ask from some of our painters a little suggestion of the infinite variety of nature?

May we not, in the same way, plead the claims of variation with some of our decorative designers? When a man lays himself out for the mastery of any special style, as Gothic or Renaissance, no objection can fairly be raised; and, indeed, we rarely find either architect or the follower of



NUMBER FIVE.



NUMBER SIX.

decorative design equally at home in two very diverse styles of work. What we rather refer to now is the practice some men have of confining themselves to a very few forms, a practice that very soon leads to a great monotony in their work. We would desire to point out the great desirability of a more general study of nature on the part of our designers. The French are far more alive to this necessity than other people; and in the French art schools bold yet true drawings of plant-forms form a conspicuous feature of their course of study. The inexhaustible riches of nature afford the designer an opportunity that a study of anthemion, acanthus, and the like can only give; and the man who has studied and sketched by the road-side or in the meadow is not only a better renderer of natural forms than the man who is content to draw his inspiration from books or his own internal consciousness, but that same knowledge leads to a nobler conventionalism of treatment too, when his work calls for that treatment. The man of study and observation is doubly armed, while the man without a well stored sketch-book is sadly weak; for work founded on knowledge must necessarily be preferable to that which has no such basis. The designer should sally forth, note-book in hand, well persuaded that even the roughest sketches made from living nature are a most valuable stock in trade. In making such sketches all the salient points should be seized, and as much of the life-history of the plant given as possible—the foliage, in all its variation of form—the opening bud—the blossom, in all the glory of its full expansion, and the fruit that follows it. We have ourselves dozens of such sketches, making no pretensions to finish, in the conventional sense of the word, yet, finished so far as this, in that they contain all that a designer can require.

Conventionalism legitimately sets us free from the necessity of identifying our forms with those of nature; but a natural treatment requires an observance of natural fact, while even conventionalised foliage must be treated in accordance with the broad principles of vegetable growth—principles that are best understood by both the study of nature and the actual representations of the forms she yields. There is, therefore, a noble and an ignoble conventionalism, the one based on knowledge, the other showing the unmistakable want of it.



NUMBER SEVEN.